THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. III. December 17, 1937 Tebet 13, 5698 No. 16.

EDITORIALS

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By Miriam J. Cohen

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EDITORIALS

Democracy and The American Jewish Congress

AT its recent convention, the American Jewish Congress revised its system of elections by providing for an electoral machinery which would make it possible for every Jew to vote for delegates to the Congress whether or not he is affiliated with any Jewish organization. This method of election was used at the time of the temporary American Jewish Congress which was called forth by the emergency of the World War and the prospect of negotiating treaties that would determine the future of the Jewish people in the post-War period.

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST is heartily in sympathy with the purpose of making Jewish communal life as democratic as possible. The determination of Jewish public policy must be governed by public opinion and not be dependent on *shtadlanut,* on the intercession of men whose leadership is based on power and prestige that they have achieved in other than Jewish fields. But we have frequently reiterated the thought to which we again call attention, that the achievement of this objective cannot be accomplished merely by extending the suffrage to a wider electorate. Modern experience should have taught us to distinguish between the substance of democracy and its mere form. It should have made us aware that an electoral machinery can be utilized to impose on a people a government that misrepresents rather than represents them unless the electorate is familiar with all the issues involved. A popular vote at the present time, even if conducted with the most scrupulous honesty, would probably retain Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin at the head of their respective countries, but this does not mean that these men represent the genuine interests of their people.

The suffrage is not an inherent right like life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Nowhere is it given to children or to unnaturalized aliens. It is a privilege that implies a responsibility. The democratic slogan of the American Revolution, "No taxation without representation" is no more valid than its converse, "No representation without taxation."

Applied to the Jewish scene, this means that a share in determining Jewish policy can only be claimed legitimately by Jews who identify themselves wholeheartedly with the Jewish people, and that not only on election day. In a state with police power over its citizens, there is a logic to universal suffrage. Since every man is compelled to obey the government,

he must be given a share in establishing it in order to protect his interests whether he be wise or foolish, idealistic or materialistic. But this does not apply to the Jewish community. There are no such grounds for giving a ballot to any Jew who is not sufficiently interested in the Jewish community to assist in maintaining the institutions through which it lives its organic life. We dare not overlook the fact that there are in our midst many Jews to whom Dr. Baron, in his recent History, has given the appropriate name "inverted Marranos," persons who would abandon the Jewish people if it were possible for them to do so but who, because of the pressure of anti-Semitism are compelled to remain Jews.

If these "inverted Marranos" take a penitent attitude and want to identify themselves with the interests of their people and actively promote their welfare, they should be accepted with open arms. But there is great danger that ambitious careerists who, for personal reasons, desire to pose as Jewish leaders, may come into power by soliciting the suffrage of these Jew-by-duress and will succeed by specious arguments and prejudiced appeals. Under these circumstances the true aim of Jewish democracy, which is the adequate representation of every organized Jewish interest that is committed to loyalty to Jewish group survival, is better served by limiting the suffrage to members of organizations with an affirmative Jewish program than by conferring it on all who are willing to be registered as Jews on election day even though they may forget that they are Jews for the rest of the year. There is less danger to true democracy in giving more than one vote to Jews who belong to more than one Jewish functional organization (and thus have many Jewish interests to protect and advance), than in giving a voice to Jews who lack all sense of responsibility for the perpetuation and development of Jewish life and therefore feel no need of affiliating with any kind of Jewish institution or association.

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST has, on more than one occasion, voiced the hope that the American Jewish Congress would give reality to its aspiration for democracy in Jewish life by devoting itself to the creation of responisble Jewish *kehillot* wherever possible. Such community organizations would have to define the privileges and responsibilities of membership and provide the machinery by which all who discharge their responsibilities as members might be able to make their influence felt. Jewish life cannot continue to be organized solely on an emergency basis. A social structure must be created for regulating the day to day activities that call for the cooperation of Jews.

Until such a social structure is created the talk of democracy is idle chatter. An unorganized *demos* is a mob and mob-rule is not what we mean by democracy. When will the American Jewish Congress come to grips with this problem, on the solution of which the reality of the Congress's claim to represent American Jewry must ultimately depend?

When the War Breaks Out

IT has been pointed out that, quite without our realizing it, we have drifted from a post-war to a pre-war psychology. To read the papers, to listen to the radio, to observe the attitudes of movie audiences, one is driven to the conclusion that most Americans are absorbed today with the question: What are we going to do when the war breaks out?

Generally speaking, there are three broad approaches to the question: (1) Participation with other democracies against the fascist powers; (2) Absolute isolation; and (3) Cooperation with non-belligerents in peaceful but effective sanctions against the aggressor. There are very few who openly advocate that the United States go to war. There seems to be a large body of sympathizers with the second course of action, and a more articulate group backing the third program.

That there will be a war no one seems to doubt, except a few travelers returning from a week's stay in Europe, who, apparently, discovered there some secret archives with information unknown even to the ministries of European nations. Economists and historians foresee inevitable conflict on the basis of intricate social forces; the man on the street foresees war, plainly and simply, on the basis of the realization that nations do not spend the major portions of their budget on armaments unless they are preparing for a war that they know is coming. During the recent Armistice Day celebration in London, it remained for an escaped lunatic to come out with the truth when he shouted that the massed thousands who stood in respectful silence at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier were at that moment being betrayed by hypocritical leaders preparing for slaughter.

In attempting to achieve an integrated point of view, we must clarify one phase of the problems beforehand. We must answer the question: Are we interested in the moral obligations of the United States, or in the physical salvation of its citizens? This is an important question, because the specious moral obligations are bound to be trotted out by the propagandists. They were successfully presented in 1917, when we were told to give our lives for democracy. Will we be asked again to go abroad and fight for democracy? If so, we should ever bear in mind that our participation in a war "to preserve democracy" will avail us nought. The last war brought anything but democracy to the participating nations. The real issue should be brought to the fore: a war between the so-called democracies and the fascist powers is a war of opposing and conflicting imperialisms, and there is mighty little moral principle at stake.

There is no value, however, in killing a corpse; the sentiment in favor of participating in a foreign war is very slight. But there is value in killing a very live menace. That menace consists in the belief that the United States can take a partisan stand in a war between two nations (or more) without becoming involved in actual combat. There is great danger in any official "quarantine" such as the President of the United States suggested in his now famous Chicago address. With all the best intentions in the world, we could not remain outside a war when we have taken the first steps to oppose one side and support the other. Economic sanctions did not stop Italy; official sanctions will not stop Japan, and if the purpose of boycott is to stop the aggressor, its only achievement will be to precipitate the aggressor into desperation and blind fury. The only logical consequence of economic boycott is military intervention.

It seems to us that, under present conditions, nothing that the United States can do will stop the fascist nations from attempting to gain their avowed ends. And it is a sad commentary upon the moral state of the world that any nation should openly declare itself concerned only with its own preservation. But that is the situation, and the people of the United States must face it. And if we are clearly determined to save our own skins, and let the so-called moral obligations go, the only course left open is that of complete isolation.

The difficulties involved are many and great, and should not be underestimated. The Neutrality Committee of the National Economic and Social Planning Association recently made public a study prepared under the chairmanship of George Soule, of the *New Republic,* in which the costs of isolation are emphasized. The study stresses the economic penalties which would have to be paid in the event that our foreign trade were to be cut off from major beligerent nations. A play entitled "The Ghost of Yankee Doodle," currently produced in New York, portrays the tremendous pressure upon the economic situation which prolonged neutrality would exert, and the equal and opposite pressure which indus-

trialists would exert to terminate the isolation in order to revive business and placate the restive unemployed.

But we insist that no economic crisis can be as tragic as the death of a single man on a foreign battlefield. And we submit that the sacrifices made in the cause of peace are at least tolerable, since they are made in that cause; while the sacrifices made in war are futile and tragic. However, the sacrifices for peace need not be as great as they are pictured. If the process of socialization were hastened in this country, and a more equitable distribution of our nation's wealth were effected, we would depend less upon foreign trade for our economic health. We would not necessarily collapse when isolated. Now is the time to prepare for the exigencies of peace.

Many will ask: Is it not true that if we do not stop the fascists now, they will ultimately invade our own shores? That may be, and against such a day, we should fortify our *defences;* we should merge our various departments of war into a ministry of defence, and concentrate solely upon defensive instruments. There is plenty of time to fight if and when our shores are invaded. But it is more likely that when a war overseas is finished, even the victors will be too utterly exhausted to seek new worlds to conquer. The way war is conducted today, there are no intact victorious powers. The winners are losers too.

And perhaps after the storm we may then be able to wield whatever moral influence we can. Having stood aloof from the fray, and having emerged strong and untouched, we can perhaps then talk of sanity and justice to a world penitent and peaceful. Isolation today seems to be the only reasonable course; but we must not forget that isolation demands a price. That price is the creation of a socialized economy which can withstand the deprivation of foreign markets and trade. We believe that the price is a blessing in disguise.

Are There No Jewish Stars?

"THE Night of Stars" recently conducted by the United Palestine Appeal may have been a financial success. Certainly, THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST knowing the financial needs of Zionist work hopes that it was. None the less, the evening was from every significantly Jewish point of view a spiritual failure.

The program offered was a typical "benefit" routine. Actors, actresses, musicians, cabaret performers voluntarily gave of their talents to provide an evening's entertainment. Unfortunately, many of the acts were vulgar, and all were marked by the absence of Jewish values of any type whatsoever.

It is not hard to understand the motivation of the persons who launched, managed and staged the presentation. From their point of view there was a certain sum of money which needed desperately to be raised. They proceeded on the assumption, "Any means to a good end." And yet some of them must have had a sour taste in their mouths as they watched the show that they staged. For the program need not have been as trivial as it turned out to be. There could have been some numbers of significant Jewish talent, something of dignity to elevate the tone of the entire evening.

Were situations such as this unique, THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST would not venture to comment on this particular instance. Affairs such as this, however, are becoming an increasing evil in Jewish life. There are Men's Clubs who keep themselves alive by purveying vaudeville entertainment; congregations which finance themselves through "Bingo" parties, and philanthropic agencies which, if the law does not prevent, arrange for organized gambling at their public social functions.

To be sure, it can be argued that only thus can funds be collected. Yet sooner or later, if Jewish life is not to be entirely vulgarized, the turning point must come. We call upon every Jewish organization to resolve that no matter what

program it offers there will be something meaningfully Jewish associated with it; that at no time will it stoop to the tawdry and distasteful. For the choice before American Jewry is two-fold. It can continue to offer to people what it sometimes believes they desire, progressively lowering standards of taste until Jewish life becomes obnoxious to Jews of normal sensitivities. Or it can, on the other hand, insist that there shall be dignity in all Jewish public gatherings.

In the last analysis, the question is larger than merely the one of good taste. Vulgarity in Jewish life is in no slight measure the result of Jewish disorganization. In a sanely planned Jewish community it would not be necessary to conduct vaudeville shows in order to raise budgets.

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST is loathe to make itself wearisome by eternal repetition of the theme of communal organization. Yet it cannot forego pointing out this consequence of chaos in American Jewry. There are numerous arguments in favor of a better Jewish communal set-up. Among these may now be listed the fact that disorganization leads directly to the need for the kind of evening's entertainment which "The Night of Stars" turned out to be.

The Proposed Jewish State

By MARVIN B. GELBER

THE question of the partition of Palestine is recognized by all partisans as one of the most momentous that has yet faced the Jewish people. The implications of Zionism have been most boldly drawn by a Royal Commission of the British Government and the possible realization of the nationalist ambition in the lifetime of the present generation has come as a shock to even the most ardent followers of political Zionism. From the status of a foster child of the nations, endowed with certain rights based on international law, the Jewish people is now confronted with the challenge of potential sovereignty over a portion of the world that has always played a cardinal role in its history.

Jewish opposition to still another division of Palestine was quick to arise, though it has really failed to state its case in terms of essential, historical perspective. There have been warnings against narrowing the limits of the national ambition. There have been eloquent appeals to sacred national destiny. But in all this the issue has been shrouded in a sweet mysticism, rather than met by an examination of the problem in terms of basic social and political fact.

What is that fact? Of what clay is the Jewish man and woman moulded? At what point has a people exhausted its capacity to withstand the agony of a hounded existence? Has Israel no altar but a Cup of Tears and no symbol of national redemption but a Wall of Wailing tragedies? Or is Jewry a race of supermen?

We can look to the historic experience of the Jewish people for an answer.

I

Zionism is a reinterpretation of the Jewish heritage in terms of modern living and modern thinking. This nationalist movement is the rebirth of Jewry in the era which the French Revolution bequeathed to a bewildered humanity. Contemporary Israel is part of that world. Jewish problems are merely a

peculiar reflection of the general problem. The suspicion, hatred and strife that is eating at the vitals of Jewish existence is the price Jewry is paying for the twentieth century, such as it is. The world is staggering under a load of insecurity. Jewry is also insecure. Its frustration is the universal disease. Jewish life is an exaggerated manifestation of the common *malaise.*

The world of the last one hundred and fifty years has been rapidly expanding. The most amazing feature of modern living is its dynamic nature in frenzied struggle with the rigidities of social relationships. No nation or group of people has been able to withstand the torrent. No institution, associational unit or social hierarchy has been able to emerge unscathed.

Zionism must be dynamic. Palestine must be dynamic. Everything else is merely toying with Jewish fate and invoking fine prhases to no good end.

Palestine has emerged from its position as a focus for sentimental heartpourings. Palestine has become a developing reality. One year it absorbed 40,000 Jews and important industries were established and expanded. Another year it took in a further sixty thousand, while electric consumption doubled, tripled, quadrupled. In a year of rioting a further 32,000 Jews crossed the salvational threshold. These are the beautiful facts. This is the stuff out of which Jewish destiny must be moulded.

Appeals to Jewish aspiration that deny the right to Jewish existence are vulgar plagiarisms on prophecy. There can be no future for Israel once the morale of world Jewry cracks under the strain of awful living. It would be a profound tragedy for a Zionist Congress of anti-Partitionists to inherit the whole of Palestine a quarter of a century hence and a Jewish people too demoralized to reap the rewards of their ascetic patience.

What are the realities? In the courts of the world the Jewish claim is based on a right, legally recognized by fifty-two nations. The statute of that right is the mandate. In a period of years it has become whittled down to a nonsensical triviality. Not only that, but the very system of international law on which the claim is legally based is critically threatened. The rise of the international anarchy has frightened even the democratic powers. Where is that claim now? How much is that right worth in the market place of world diplomacy where the destiny of nations is bargained at cheap prices? What is the validity of that mandate, even if it did work?

The Mandate Commission of the League of Nations said that the mandate became unworkable the moment the British Government declared it to be so. A British Administration that did not work the mandate, even before it was convinced of its inherent unworkability, is not likely to discover the mandatory elixir after having publicly declared the bankruptcy of this constitutional instrument.

Jewish rights are circumscribed in mandated Palestine. In Trans-Jordan Jews have no rights at all. In the rest of Palestine there is little room for a land program, and immigration is being progressively sabotaged.

But for all that, it does not mean that the mandate is unworkable as an instrument of government. The impression has been gaining wide confirmation that it never was entrusted to an administration that had any real faith in the task at hand. The officialdom has lacked the intelligence, daring and imagination to initiate the necessary policy But that same administration represents a very real factor in the Palestinian problem and the chances of obtaining a complete *volte face* of British practice is almost completely out of the question. The best Zionists can hope for under the present system is a greater benevolence. At best,—this is not good enough.

Thus the first real political fact with which the Jews must deal in Palestine is British inflexibility. And as such, this is

not stated as a criticism, but as a particular development of history resulting from the peculiar conjuncture of forces in that country. It is true that the Royal Commission now concedes the Zionist argument that the prime obligation of the mandate is towards the upbuilding of the Jewish National Home, but it also declares that promises were made to both the Jews and the Arabs which are inconsistent with the basic political realities of the country. Colonial governors are more likely to be impressed with the alleged, inherent contradictions than with the legal victory for the Zionist contention, which has been argued ever since the Churchill White Paper of 1922 commenced the retreat from the promises of the Balfour Declaration.

Nor is a change of Government in Great Britain likely to lead to a radical departure from previous practice. Jewish rights were never whittled down to such a monstrous nonsense as under the ill-fated White Paper of the doctrinaire, Lord Passfield (Mr. Sidney Webb). Neither the report of the Shaw Commission, after the disturbances of 1929, nor that of Sir John-Hope Simpson which followed, suggested such a reawakening of feudalism as Lord Passfield envisaged. It is true that his policy was quickly nullified, but only following the outraged protests of a united Jewry and prior to a bye-election in Whitechapel.

II

As for the Arab world, it is rapidly becoming infected with a Nazi mentality. The politically vocal Arabs are largely drawn from the feudal aristocracy and the rising middle classes have been quick to take their cue from German and Italian mentors, who are obtaining profitable returns for services rendered.

This Nazi mentality is most significantly exemplified in the rejection of the idea of social progress and the exaltation of the Arab place in the sun. It is therefore right that the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq should have been the spokesman for the Arab politicians, because both at home and abroad his government was an exponent of the vicious fascist system.

This is the second great political fact. In terms of historical perspective it is next in order of importance because Arab irreconcilability is partly the creation of British action and inaction in Palestine. Today the Arab movement has achieved a momentum of its own which may mean that this factor is emerging as the single most powerful force at work in the Near East.

And barring any sudden disintegration of the international anarchy, Jewry will be confronted with an implacable oriental neighbor whose political life is monopolized by the agents of every mischievous power. This momentous tragedy must stamp the whole development of the Jewish National Home and compound a hundredfold the problem of maintaining a dynamic Palestine. Should this vast community have merely remained immobilized in the face of Jewish enterprise a very serious element of inflexibility would have been introduced into the life of the country. But the active hostility which has permeated to all strata of Arab society might yet plunge the Palestinian economy into a spiral of decay and dash for all time the hopes and ambitions of world Jewry. This is a well-nigh crushing reality.

And what of the Jews themselves? The achievements in Palestine are not the result of uninspired plodding. In the face of almost insuperable obstacles and widespread skepticism within the ranks of their fellows, the Zionist groups transformed the country only by dint of the most agile and powerful activity. They refused to allow either the social, political and economic barriers in Palestine, nor the smugness of their compatriots to immobilize their efforts. They could afford to build castles in the air because they had produced positive achievement on the land. They were dreamers, but they were also builders. Should it now be made impossible for them to build, their dreams

could become dangerous. There are great perils for Jewry in a static Palestine.

III

Thus instead of being an instrument of liberation, the mandate has become a yoke that is crystallizing Jewish achievement at too early a stage. It is now imperative to introduce some new basis for building and living that will allow greater scope to Jewish energies. The continued frustration of the healthy impulses of Jewish life can only intensify further the disorders inhibiting Jewish existence.

A Jewish state might provide just that medium for Jewish creativity which it is the aim of Zionism to achieve. But certainly the boundaries of the proposed division of Palestine hardly commend themselves to fair minded people, nor will the principles on which they were suggested bear scrutiny in the light of solemn obligations. The plan of the Royal Commission as an aftermath of much reasoned concession to the Jewish point of view looks very much as if the Commissioners awarded the argument to the Jews and Palestine to the Arabs.

Jews should beware lest in their enthusiasm they betray the essence of their Zionism for the form of a Jewish state. A Jewish Palestine bereft of its hinterland can provide a homeland for *luftmenschen.* But the roots of a creative Jewish civilization must be entrenched in the soil of the country and not on the sand dunes of an independent, Jewish metropolis. Jews must be wary of the attempt to grant them a flag but deny them a homeland.

There are two types of static Palestine which are threatening. The first is contained in a larger area. It is an area permitted to Jewish enterprise after two-thirds of the territory had been bequeathed to Emir Abdullah as his own principality and had been abstracted from the ambit of Jewish activity. This was the first partition. This Palestine is rapidly becoming frozen. With only a thousand immigrants permitted a month as a maximum, and with land purchases obstructed in a manner not tolerated in any democratic country, the area for future action has become severely circumscribed.

The second static Palestine is the one that impends if the suggestion of the Royal Commission is carried out. It is a Palestine shorn of its hinterland by the imperial arbiters who thought that they might appease the land-glutted Arabs of the world with a few square miles denied to exilic Israel. It is an over-crowded Palestine, a top-heavy Palestine, a Palestine that would be forced to rely on the good will of its Arab neighbors for a hinterland. This Lilliputian state could also become a danger to world Jewry. It would be a terrible tragedy if the basic political and economic realities of the country set up an antithesis between Zionism and Palestine, between Jewry and its homeland. Such a Palestine would not be worth scrapping the mandate to attain.

Thus the friends of Jewry and of Palestine must fight for that scheme which will allow the greatest flexibility and give scope to all the important creative impulses that Zionism has called into play. A Jewish state with a comfortable hinterland such as is available in the almost uninhabited south, could provide just such a basis for action. A state that is choked from its inception would be a step in the wrong direction. But no matter how beneficial a settlement is achieved, we will still have to pray with Isaiah that Zion shall be redeemed through justice.

The Middle Class Mind and Fascism

By MICHAEL ALPER

Who Are the Middle Class?

WITH the single exception of the situation in the Soviet Union, the middle class holds the deciding power in the political world today. In our own country, many workers after years of depression are not even wage-conscious, let alone class-conscious. At best they are only job-conscious. Objectively considered, their economic status is plainly proletarian; psychologically considered however, they act and think like members of the middle class.

Who are the people that constitute the genuine middle class? Historically, the middle class is the class of entrepreneurs that arose on the ruins of the feudal system and that helped develop the capitalist system of "rugged individualism." In the beginning of its history, the middle class stood midway between the remaining peasant serfs and the landed nobility. Today the middle class stands midway between the wage workers or proletariat in city or farm on the one hand, and the numerically small but economically powerful capitalist owning class on the other hand.

More specifically, the middle class can be divided into at least two parts, the upper and the lower. The division can best be made on the basis of income or property rather than on the basis of occupation, for in the same occupation there is often a wide disparity of income. Those with lower incomes, regardless of occupation, would belong economically to the lower middle class even though they may consider themselves members of the "upper bourgeoisie."

The middle class population includes manufacturers, merchants, small shopkeepers, store-keepers, farm owners, small property owners; also professional "salaried" workers such as teachers, doctors, lawyers, dentists, artists, ministers, social workers, engineers, architects, chemists, musicians, executives, etc. Then there is a large class of "white collar" workers such as clerks, salesmen, stenographers, bookkeepers, typists, telephone and telegraph operators, social service workers, service-help workers.

It will be seen that the so-called middle-class is in reality a conglomeration of several middle-classes. Karl Marx had predicted thta the middle groups such as master-craftsmen, independent artisans and small traders would tend to disappear and that the employer-owning class would become smaller but more powerful. This part of his prophecy has come true in the rise of the large corporations and department stores which force out of business many a small merchant and shopkeeper. However, Marx expected such displaced members of the middle class to be compelled to join the proletariat wage-workers. He expected that the middle class would gradually be eliminated and that a death-struggle would ensue between the proletariat on the one hand and the capitalist class on the other hand. Marx failed to foresee the rise of a "new" middle class coincident with the rise of the corporate structure of capitalism.

In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels did declare that "As modern industry develops, the petty bourgeoisie sees the moment approaching when it will cease to exist as an independent section of modern society, to be replaced in manufactures, agriculture and commerce, by managers, superintendents and foremen." However, the number of high priced managers, superintendents and foremen are negligible as compared with the large number of white-collar workers which corporate capitalism has developed and fostered. Witness the many workers in the marketing process such as salesmen, advertising men, jobbers, collectors, credit men. We have already mentioned clerks,

stenographers and typists. We should also add real-estate agents, insurance agents and brokers. Modern corporate society has also expanded the fields of law, accountancy, research, and engineering. Government and Civil Service positions have also increased enormously.

Government statistics are available as to the exact number of members in the various middle class groupings. Suffice it to say that it can be shown that the middle class groups taken together are numerically the equal of the proletariat or wage-working class, though at least two-thirds of these are completely divorced from the ownership of productive property. When we consider the fact that millions of proletarians are psychologically still members of the middle class, then it becomes obvious that our country, as is the case of other capitalist countries, is dominated overwhelmingly by the middle-class mind.

This fact is of paramount importance in our endeavor to understand and combat fascism. For fascism is the last desperate effort of the owners of privilege and power, the bankers, the great industrialists and the great landlords, to preserve by violence and at all costs the dying capitalist system. But the essential thing to bear in mind in this connection is that fascism rises to power on the backs of the middle class, and especially the lower middle class, by using them as a battering ram to destroy working class and democratic institutions. The middle class becomes a tool in the hands of high finance and big industry. It behooves us, therefore, to examine the basic ideals and prejudices of the middle-class mind which clever demagogues are exploiting for fascist ends.

The Middle Class Mind

The outstanding characteristic of the middle class mind is its individualism. The middle class person thinks and acts exclusively like a detached individual. Unlike the proletariat or the capitalist, the middle class person does not feel himself a member of a class. Whereas the worker, especially in the large factory, comes to feel a sense of solidarity with his fellow workers because be realizes his own lack of power and importance in the industrial set-up, and whereas the capitalist too is aware of his identity of interest with his fellow capitalists, the middle class person, by and large, is least conscious of social realities. The class-conscious worker joins up with, and operates through trade unions, cooperatives and political parties. The capitalist forms a Liberty League and a National Manufacturers' Association to pool the interests of his class. Only the middle class person shies clear of organization. The small shop-keeper or manufacturer considers himself his own boss; so does the lawyer or doctor. The white-collar worker too, because of his special skill, considers himself as one who achieved his status on account of individual initiative and ability. Such people nourish the illusion of individual independence for they do not see the dependence of their work or business upon the general social-economic structure and the ability of workers to buy goods and services.

In the period of expanding capitalism when there are ready markets, and profits are multiplying, the middle class person looks up to the big capitalist as his superior and strives to emulate him. Correspondingly, he tends to look down upon the wage-worker as an inferior person who does not possess enough ability "to get ahead" in this "land of opportunity."

The middle class person has inherited the doctrine of *laissez-faire* and firmly believes that in the scramble for wealth in a competitive system, the welfare of all is thereby served. His own relative comfort and false sense of independence have lulled him into a sense of smug complacency and of satisfaction with things as they are. Not having need to struggle for existence in an organized ideological fashion as is the case with the class-conscious worker, the middle class person shuns intellectual exertion beyond that required for immediate business or professional needs. His own false sense of se-

curity has convinced him that the capitalist system is the best of all possible systems though he has never taken the trouble to examine other systems or even to examine the workings of his own government.

Above all else, the middle class person cherishes personal security. To own property, investments, insurance and a bank account constitute for him the end of human existence. To strive for these things is the *summum bonum,* the apex of life's worthwhileness.

It must be borne in mind that all the capitalist contrivances for public education and propaganda conspire to keep alive and transmit middle class ideals and prejudices. The newspaper, the movie, the radio, the magazine and the comic strip—to mention but a few agencies, cater to the middle class mentality, and workers are the beneficiaries or victims of this propaganda alike with the members of the middle class. The class-conscious proletariat strives to overcome such propaganda, however, by banding together for the purpose of counteracting middle class propaganda with his own propaganda. As a consequence, we have working class newspapers and magazines, working class movies and dramas, working class music and art, etc. But the middle class person who is unconscious of the fact that he is a member of a class, is not aware that the ideals and prejudices that are officially promulgated by the ruling class for his consumption are essentially class ideals and class prejudices. He is therefore inclined to identify his philosophy of life with "the American way" or with "the American system of government." Workers who organize in unions for their own protection and welfare are more often than not considered aliens, reds or agitators who ought to be deported anyway. Strikes are usually "communist-inspired" and no "respectable" American would support strikers. And when his own comfort or security is threatened by a strike, the typical middle class person is all for the *status quo* by extolling "law and order" to the point of forming vigilante groups to defend it.

To the middle class person of property and status there is no disgrace like that of losing such property and status. Because he does not understand the working of the capitalist system, he is inclined to seek scapegoats upon whom to blame his own failure and impoverishment. Whereas, in a declining economy, the class conscious proletariat will fight to abolish the system, the economically and politically iguorant individualist middle class person is inclined to blame some person or group of persons for his plight. He is therefore inclined to lend a ready ear to the legend that the "reds" are responsible for the crisis, or else the "aliens" or the Jews. At best, it is the bad men or organizations, and not the system, that is at fault. It is the greedy bankers or the Jewish bankers who are to blame, or else it is the communists or the trade unions that is to blame.

When the politically and economically ignorant middle class person finds that his income is dwindling, or that his salary is being reduced, and that he might lose his job, or when he faces bankruptcy through loss of investments, or the foreclosing of his mortgage, his whole philosophy of life suffers a severe blow; his pride and self-esteem is hurt and his resentment knows no bounds. Not only must he have a scapegoat upon whom to blame his present low estate, but he must also have psychological compensation for his own sense of inferiority and insignificance as an individual. At this point anti-Semitism serves a double purpose. Psychologically, by blaming it all on the Jews, he clears his own soul from the sense of personal responsibility for his plight, while economically, by driving out the Jews as competitors in the trades or professions, he hopes to improve his own lot.

The Role of Fascist Demagogy

Since the real source of fascism lies in the social resentments and in the political confusion of middle class people, it is the function of the fascist demagogues

to exploit middle class fears, hatreds and loyalties in order to combat the rising proletariat class and in order to prevent their utilizing the apparatus of capitalist democracy to socialize industry through the gradual abolition of the profit system. In this, of course, he is aided and abetted by the big financiers. It was a large banking house which first gave Mussolini financial backing and it was the Thyssen steel group, together with some Jewish bankers that gave Hitler his. The fascist demagogue know that the middle class person is afraid, both of the organized proletariat and of the greedy bankers. He therefore directs his propaganda not only against the "radicals" and communists, but also against the big bankers. Hitler preached "freedom from economic servitude," though with the increasing strength of the Nazi party, his propaganda grew increasingly milder until finally he drew a distinction between productive and unproductive capital, the latter, the source of all evil, being the diabolical invention of the Jews. In this country Father Coughlin has been preaching money and credit manipulation, and at the same time has blamed the international Jewish bankers for the crisis.

The middle class desire for personal security and their great respect for property is also exploited by the fascist demagogue. Because of his ignorance of the collective character of property in a technical society, the middle class person does not distinguish in his own mind between production property and consumption property. Consequently, when he is told that the workers want to socialize property, he is inclined to think that that means the socialization of his home, of his clothing and even of his toothbrush. It is not clear in his mind that the organized radicals want to socialize the instruments of mass production which are socially produced but privately owned. It is therefore easy for the fascist demagogue to din into the ears of his followers the notion that the "reds" (and all organized workers are reds, inspired by Moscow) want to destroy "civilization."

To blur the lines of class division and to dull the edge of the class struggle, it is necessary to find a unifying principle. Here is where nationalism is whipped up by the demagogue into a religion. The common enemy of the nation are the reds and the Jews. Where possible, the myth of racial superiority is added thereto to recapture for the little man a sense of individual worth and pride. In Germany it is the Aryan myth; in Italy, Mussolini made of his followers the inheritors of the "grandeur that was Rome." In this country, because of the many and varied mixed racial strains, anti-Semitism is not making as much headway as is anti-communism, though the last election in New York City seemed to indicate that even the red-scare has not made much headway here.

The preaching of inflamed nationalism serves another function, namely, to prepare the country for war. Fascist countries must ultimately go to war in order to survive. Fascism idealizes the profit system and its corollary, war, even as it denounces socialism and its corollary, peace and democracy. Inflamed nationalism helps promote an aggressive imperialism, and the normal patriotic sentiments of the middle class are exploited to the full for this purpose.

The middle class is not aware until too late that it has been beguiled by a demagogue into the service of monopoly and finance capitalism. While fascism represents itself as a defender of middle class ideals and virtues, and while in its beginnings it gives promise of becoming a middle class dictatorship over the working class and the capitalist class, the history of European fascism has shown us that because of an inner logical development it rapidly transforms itself into a restricted oligarchy of bankers and industrialists, and then into a personal tyranny with the aid of the military.

Since the balance of power in modern capitalist democracies rests with the mid-

dle class, it devolves upon the middle class, especially in this period of capitalist decline, to study and understand its place and function in the social, economic system, and to realize that it has the historic choice of siding with the organized workers in their endeavor to achieve a socialist economy, or else of playing into the hands of fascist demagogues.

The Poems of Jessie Sampter

By Miriam J. Cohen

WHO is a poet? That is a question more easily answered than, "What is poetry?" The poet by the intensity of his passion and the keenness of his perceptions creates for his audience a vision of beauty and truth captured in flight, caught fast for a brief moment, so that its ultimate attainability seems momentarily possible. In a sense, that is the function of all art, to convince men of the potential attainability of their highest aspirations.

Obviously so tenuous a standard cannot be rigorously applied. There must be flexibility in all definitions, and generous-mindedness, and humility. One cannot say of Jessie Sampter's *Brand Plucked from the Fire** that it is a volume of great poetry. And yet it seems almost an intellectual conceit to make such a judgment of one whose final lines exhibit so penetrating an appreciation of poetry:

> "Poor poets that in agonies of speech
> Strive for the silences they cannot reach!"

It seems almost impertinent to ask how well the author has achieved what she set out to do. Yet that is the task set before me.

Miss Sampter's verse form is for the most part conventional in a-b-a-b rhyme scheme, except for one or two sonnets and occasional experiments with modern verse forms. There is no originality or boldness in her verse patterns, or in her diction. The love of Palestine into which she seems to have channelized her every expression of emotion is the inspiration of her poetry as it is the motivation of her life.

Her passionate devotion to the land is sincere and deep, but somehow it is not compelling. Her poetry has charm, but it lacks vigor and force. She has a delicate sense of the picturesque, and a pleasant talent for description, but she lacks the genius to make of the rich material of life in Palestine a stirring picture to evoke universal pity and hope. For example on a theme so magnificent, so stirring, so fraught with human emotions as "The New Kvutza of Workers," Miss Sampter has chosen to write:

> "I boil the beans and garden greens
> And fry the rice in oil,
> For several dozens of 'German cousins'
> Come hungry from their toil."

Her treatment of common every day things is better, because here the discrepancy between her form and her subject is not so great. She is at her best in a simple poem where her lilting phrases are charming:

> "The gold and green of swamps and meads
> Weave patterns on the earth.
> Armies and battles, epic deeds
> Have brought but grass to birth."

There is one splendid sonnet in the volume, "Massacre of the Students at Hebron," with its moving opening lines:

> "Oh yes, the lore of pain has made me wise
> Cracking my lips with devastating kiss
> To seal discipleship."

*Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1937.

And in her real understanding of the eternal pathos of striving, she loses herself in man's common tragedy. It is a pity that her phrases are not vivid or striking enough to be memorable. Yet one cannot but respect the poetic insight of this poem. Were it not for the weakening effect of the last two lines, it would be almost great:

"The past is crying in my flesh
The future in my brain
They draw my spirit's tangled mesh
With the universal pain.

Why have men set creation's myth
Millenniums away?
The God that I must grapple with
Is making me today."

A constantly recurring theme is a desire for peace and a bitter sense of the ceaseless inevitability of war.

"This is your punishment; that you must kill." And again, "Every inch of our houses is built on blood soaked ground."

In the poems which are concerned with religion, Miss Sampter is reminiscent of Francis Thompson's eternal doctrine of the pursuit of God. Though she lacks the dramatic surge of Francis Thompson, there is the same intensity:

"As there I lay upon my bed and sought Him,
Behold, He heard, He answered all my cries:
From depths beyond the stars, from depths within,
He spoke — from everywhere — He filled the world."

So much for specific poems. The question whether Miss Sampter has accomplished what she set out to do has not yet been discussed. If she has set out to capture in pure lyric poetry what Palestine has meant to her, she has been but half successful, half successful insofar as she makes explicit the significance of Palestine; but she has not produced lyric poetry. Except for their honest intensity, Miss Sampter's poems are a disappointment, both from the point of view of the critic of poetry and from the point of view of the Zionist who welcomes too eagerly any expression of the Zionist point of view embodied in creative form.

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